Opposite the pulpit is the seat of the Dutch ambassador, which is a kind of tribune fitted up in wainscot, with a canopy of modern Romano-Batavian architecture.

Less than a fifth part of this church is fitted up for the use of the congregation; and from the decline of the Dutch trade, scarcely half this accommodation is made use of. It is to be lamented that so fine a church, which, if restored, and its windows filled by stained-glass, would be so useful and magnificent a structure, calculated by enlivening service, by psalmody, and other reverential chants, to warm to devotion two or three thousand people, should be so cheerless and so little used; but we are pleased at finding the establishment well endowed with charities.

SECOND LECTURE ON ARCHITECTURE

BY J. L. THOMAS.

Delivered at the Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics' Institute, Brecon.

Mr. Thomas commenced his second lecture on Architecture by a short recapitulation of the different epochs upon which he had treated in his first lecture, and then took up the subject at that period of literary darkness which, after the downfall of the Roman Empire, overspread all the nations of Europe, and when the arts, from their intimate connection with letters, were involved in the general obscurity. He thought that this grand revolution in the history of the world, though in appearance most disastrous, was ultimately productive of large and most extensive benefits; as it seemed to attract to one centre many nations who at a subsequent period radiated from this common axis to all parts of the globe, carrying with them not only a knowledge of the arts and sciences (which they must have acquired in that great school of learning), but also the spirit of Christianity, diffusing its holy and civilizing truths wherever they went; thereby exciting the devotional feeling to the invention of modes of architecture, of which there existed no ancient model. Before proceeding with a history of those styles, with their temporary modifications in England, the lecturer touched upon the previous state of the science in Britain before the Roman invasion, and exhibited a large drawing of the celebrated remains of a Druids' temple, supposed to be raised to the worship of the Sun, on Salisbury Plain, and proceeded to enumerate many other parts of the world in which such remains are found; proving that vast tracts were inhabited by some great original nation, possessing, with probably the same language, the same religion, manners, and customs; but of all those mighty nations whose events furnish important chapters in the history of the world, it has been permitted alone to the few inhabitants of the mountains and valleys of Cambria to preserve that original language unto the present day. Mr. Thomas then again adverted to the Roman invasion and the celebrity of the British architects and artificers in the third century; but after the departure of the Romans, the long train of miserable disasters in which they were involved left little room in their minds for the cultivation of those arts of peace in which they naturally delighted; and the Saxons, when they afterwards came amongst them, were more famous for their knowledge of the sword, and the temporary power and security it affords, than for acquirements which in all ages of the world tended to dignify and *establish* a nation. After touching upon many of the interesting particulars connected with the early history of our country, bearing upon his subject, the lecturer arrived at the Norman Conquest—the numerous edifices erected, first for the purpose of subjugation, then for devotion; the increasing elegance of the structures as peace and security advanced, until the golden age of the style arrived, and continued from the middle of the thirteenth to the latter end of the fourteenth century, and afterwards rapidly declined, by that infatuating desire to produce something new and still more beautiful, when it had already arrived at excellence. He then illustrated the beauties of the style, esteeming it the most appropriate for sacred edifices, as, if it were not *designed* solely with that object, it ripened into full beauty under the auspices of the church, and appeals in the most direct manner to the imagination of the observer, exciting in him those feelings of awe and emotion so peculiarly adapted to the purposes of the cathedral. On entering any of our celebrated religious edifices, although shorn of their original splendour, we are forcibly struck by their solemnity and gloomy grandeur, and the apparently interminable aisles and successive tiers of lofty arches tend to hallow and solemnize the feelings when they are viewed in the rich light admitted through emblazoned windows, which concealing the extent of the pile, and affording greater play to the imagination, display to advantage the clusters of slender columns as they shoot loftily up and are lost in the richness of the fretted roof, or the splendour of the elaborate groin, while the delicate carvings of foliage and fruit, tendrils and flowers, entwining each other in the capitals and mouldings, give a gorgeous dress and finish to the whole that can rarely fail of pleasing the most fastidious.

Mr. Thomas then alluded to the domestic edifices of this country, and commenced with castles, describing the manner in which they were generally planned and constructed; and noticed Caerphilly Castle, in Glamorganshire, as one of the finest examples of the kind in Great Britain, possessing an extraordinary variety of architectural characters, connecting the widly contrasted styles of rude feudality with those of a later period, probably during the stirring times of the De Spencer, in the reign of the unfortunate Edward, the second from the Conquest. The strange forms in which fate has visited it are also very remarkable; the south-east tower, 77 feet in height, overhangs its base nearly 11 feet, and rests only on one part of its south side. Everywhere are deep marks of the desolation caused by battery and bombardment, and the unavoidable decay of age. But the ruins have a wonderfully grand effect, when closely visited or gazed on from the surrounding heights. It is then the astonished eye takes in at once every part of the gigantic pile. Then the savage dignity of its exterior bulwarks, its vast quadrangle, its broad battlements, its rugged buttresses, and profound fosses, are viewed with a feeling of awful admiration. We are almost induced to believe we live again the ages that are gone; that we are centuries older; and not only think, but feel with the past; we plunge deep into the secrets which seem buried in the mouldering mass beneath; the loneliness seems suddenly broken; the mailed soldier paces the terrace; the courts and halls are peopled with beings of bygone days; generation on generation passes rapidly along; and the mysteries of tradition colour the past periods of splendour, chivalry, and barbarism. The lecturer then adverted to the many great changes which took place in the constitution of our country, and the ultimate amalgamation of the two great conflicting interests of the Saxon and the Norman, when the fortress had become, in a measure, unnecessary for the protection of the invaders, and were, in many instances, dismantled and thrown down by their proprietors, or left to moulder in the rottenness of time; while they adopted for their residences the pleasing picturesque gabled manorial house, and the embattled mansion of the Tudors, of which there are specimens now extant. After describing the characteristics of this style, he passed on to consider the Elizabethan; when the noble Tudor houses, with their large pointed gateways, traceried windows, buttresses, battlements, and octagonal angle-turrets, richly carved pinnacles, and wreathed chimney-shafts, were mingled together with the architecture of Italy. The art was in this unsettled state when Inigo Jones brought himself into conspicuous notice by his ability as an architect; and the very ingenious manner in which he modified the buildings of his day is clearly shewn in many exquisite productions still remaining, which prove that he was possessed of no ordinary mind, and give him an exalted rank amongst the most illustrious of our countrymen.

The lecturer then passed on to another great era, the use of the Roman style, mingled by high science, by Sir Christopher Wren. He mentioned but one of his works, and thought that one sufficient in itself to stamp an immortality upon a nation—St. Paul's Cathedral; and after minutely describing the wonderful edifice, said, "I shall conclude in the peculiarly beautiful language of a living author, 'It is the gem of Protestant churches,—an honour to the nation and its pure religion; of all the cathedrals in the world, by an especial divine favour, permitted to be the only one, which, like the *vesture of Christ*, was ever wrought in one texture throughout.'"*

He then noticed the works of another celebrated man, Sir John Vanburgh; and afterwards adduced a host of other famous names, amongst which were James Gibbs, James Stuart, and Sir William Chambers.

Mr. Thomas, after having concluded his historical account, commenced an analysis of the four ordinary periods or chronological divisions of the Gothic or Pointed mode, minutely describing the various characteristics of each style, and the times in which they flourished, and illustrating them by large detail drawings from some of our celebrated cathedrals, amongst which were many familiar subjects of local interest, being the principal features of a building, the doors, windows, niches, towers, and spires. They exhibited as plainly as the classic orders the easy gradation from massive rudeness in the Norman, to faultless proportion in the Decorated. He then contrasted the Grecian and Pointed modes in every minute particular, and by so doing proved the impropriety of attempting to mix them together. He eulogized the old English style as admirably adapted for country residences, where associations of an imaginative character come into play, and dictate a style more consonant with the surrounding aspect. Few that have seen these picturesque old mansions have not found their minds softened into tranquillity, and viewed in the rich setting sunlight of one of those warm and serene autumnal evenings, with its numerous ornaments of carved wood-work, its wreathed chimney-shafts, its large pointed windows, its solid castelled gate-house, its panelled walls and buttresses, its time-worn pinnacles, and the variegated tints left by the breath of departed ages upon its walls, giving it the semblance of having grown old with the venerable trees by which it is overshadowed, blending it as mellowly with the scenery as if it constituted a portion of the natural landscape; such a picture forcibly recalls to the mind past scenes and days long gone by, intimately associated with some stirring passages of our national history. He then proved this description of habitation to be appropriate to every rank, from the palace to the cottage, and gave an interesting description of the noblest residence of our beloved sovereign, Windsor Castle.

Mr. Thomas concluded his lectures with a tribute to the high objects and advantages, in a moral sense, of a just cultivation of the arts in connection with her two younger sisters, Painting and Sculpture. He thought it had risen above mere utility, to be an imperishable monument of our intellectual greatness; that they tend to carry the mind beyond the walks of ordinary life, to give it a respite from depressing cares and anxieties, and to awaken the consciousness of its affinity to purer and nobler elements. To those who think of nothing but mercenary aggrandisement, these flights of the mind, which have been the sole cause of the grandest works of human power, may appear extravagant; but all who properly appreciate sense, genius, and talent, know that it proceeds from no source other than the glorious working of the immortal intellect, which is gradually both powerfully developing itself, and exhibiting in those wondrous masonic creations the inestimable power and beauty of the mind.

The enthusiasm of the poet is not more exhilarating than the rich fancy of the architect, who sketches beyond what is present and visible, and soars after unseen and ideal imaginings. He beholds his name, in ages yet to come, associated with the mighty monuments of his workmanship, and fancies that posterity will feel the same enthusiasm in gazing upon his works with which he regards those eloquent memorials of former greatness. He then descanted upon the interesting pleasures of antiquarian pursuits in architecture, and pointing to a drawing of Stonehenge, alluded to the great and comprehensive truths which may be learned respecting the early inhabitants of the world, by comparing those remains with the numerous monuments of a

* Essay on the "Decline of Science, &c. in Architecture."

To learn about PDF Compression and OCR go to our website